

Drought Response Committee Conference Call

Date: January 31st, 2025

Time: 10:00 a.m.

A Drought Response Committee Conference Call was conducted at 10:00 a.m., January 31st, 2025. Notice of the date, time and call-in information was posted and provided on the scdrought.com website. Chairman Ken Rentiers, Deputy Director of SC Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) - Land, Water and Conservation Division presided at the meeting.

I. Introduction

- a. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) completed the roll call. She states that the meeting is being recorded.
- b. Hope (SCDNR) calls for a motion to approve minutes from the previous meeting.
 - i. James Bagley, 1st
 - ii. Alan Stuart, 2nd

II. PowerPoint Presentation

- a. Hope (SCDNR) shows the South Carolina drought website, scdrought.com.
 - i. Hope (SCDNR) shows the drought map from the December 4 meeting.
- b. Hope (SCDNR) shows a map of the 2024 Statewide Average Temperature Rankings, by climate division.
- c. Hope (SCDNR) shows the 2024 Statewide Precipitation Rankings, by climate division.
- d. Hope (SCDNR) shows the 30-day rainfall map and the 30-day percent of normal map.
- e. Hope (SCDNR) displays the 60-day rainfall map and 60-day percent of normal map.
- f. Hope (SCDNR) presents the 30-day SPI as of the last meeting versus yesterday.
- g. Hope (SCDNR) thanks Clemson Extension for the Tempest Station Rainfall Data for the period December 3rd to January 20th
- h. Hope (SCDNR) shows the CoCoRaHS data for each DMA.
- i. Hope (SCDNR) shows the progression of the U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) from late November through this week.
- j. Hope (SCDNR) discusses how the CMI data from NOAA has collection errors, so we must use the nationwide map, rather than the state.
- k. Hope (SCDNR) shows how the PDSI also has data flaws so we are using the national map.

III. State Agency Reports:

- a. Joe Koon, SCDES
 - i. He says there is nothing to report differently from the last meeting.
- b. Alexis Modzelesky shows the streamflow, groundwater and lake level maps.

- i. Alexis (SCDES) shows the hydrographs for each Drought Management Area. She discusses the lake level deficits and surpluses. Most of the reservoirs across the state are where they need to be.
 - a. She shows the graphics for Lake Hartwell, ACE Basin.
- 2. She discusses groundwater levels that are all around normal. The only location with a below-normal indicator is in Charleston.
 - a. Northeast DMA: normal
 - b. Central DMA: above or at normal
 - c. West DMA: normal
 - d. Southern DMA: below normal in Charleston, as previously discussed
- c. Darryl Jones, SC Forestry Commission
 - i. He shows the KBDI map. The KBDI is indicating the lack of rain in some areas.
 - ii. There were 105 fires in December, 22% above average. There were twice as many fires in January 2025 compared to the 5-year average. The more acres that burn, the quicker the fire moves.
 - 1. We are entering into a busy time for wildfires across the state, given the low humidity, wind, and lack of rainfall.
 - 2. There were multiple frosts earlier on which led to dormant vegetation, that is much easier to catch fire.
 - 3. Most of the fires were across the coastal plain. Some of the fires in the western area of the state have been more difficult to access due to downed trees and debris from Hurricane Helene.
 - iii. Katherine Helms in for Sam Quinney, SCDA, discusses agriculture conditions.
 - 1. It is a slow time for farming, but active crops seem good.
 - iv. Dave Thachik, SCEMD, discusses various events happening soon.
 - v. Hope (SCDNR) calls for input from any other state agencies.
 - vi. Kayla Stroman, FSA, discusses that most of the field reports received are indicating near normal conditions except Saluda and Edgefield counties.
 - 1. Glenn Thomas, FSA, says in the chat that there was very little rain in January for the Upstate counties he covers.
 - vii. Hope (SCDNR) makes a final call for state agencies and moves onto the short- and long-term forecasts. She shows the NOAA Drought Outlook..
 - viii. Frank Alsheimer, NWS, discusses that the farther northwest in the state, there is a better chance of receiving rainfall. NWS is concerned about the predicted lack of rain over the spring months due to the weak La Nina.

IV. Open Discussion and Vote

- a. Hope (SCDNR) moves to an open discussion and vote; shows the DMA map.
 - i. The Central and Southern DMAs do not have enough members for a quorum; therefore, they cannot conduct an official vote. A vote can only take place if there are enough present members on the call.
 1. West DMA:
 - a. Scott Willett is comfortable with staying in the current declaration. He is also worried about fires in the coming months.
 - b. Preston Pierce agrees.
 - c. Hope (SCDNR) reads an email from Brian Chemsak, who says the southern area is not showing any signs of drought.
 - d. Lynn McEwen, agrees with the current declaration.
 - e. Ken Rentiers (SCDNR), calls for a motion:
 - i. Preston Pierce, 1st
 - ii. Lynn McEwen, 2nd
 - iii. Motion approved unanimously.
 - f. Proposal: no change from the previous map.
 2. Central DMA:
 - a. Committee members present agree to proceed with a discussion, recognizing there will not be an official vote since there are not enough members present for a quorum.
 - b. Brad Powers says if there were a vote today, he would keep it under the same declaration, although he agrees the west area could be getting worse.
 - c. Alan Stuart agrees.
 - d. Hope (SCDNR) discusses how the coastal areas of this DMA are trending more toward drought.
 3. Southern DMA:
 - a. Committee members present agree to proceed with a discussion, recognizing there will not be an official vote since there are not enough members present for a quorum.
 - b. Jason Thompson states that there is not much of a difference from the last map, made in early December, to now. He and Hope (SCDNR) discuss a possible date for next Committee Meeting.
 - i. He also states that it has been wet in Charleston, with snow melting as well as rainfall.
 - c. Russell Cornette supports staying in incipient.
 - d. Matt McCants agrees.
 4. Northeast DMA:
 - a. Joe Ghent, says the area should remain incipient.
 - b. Karolan Ohanesian agrees.
 - c. Alan Watkins and Nathan Ward agree as well.
 - d. Ken Rentiers (SCDNR) calls for a motion.
 - i. Joe Ghent, 1st

- ii. Karolan Ohanesian, 2nd
 - iii. Motion approved unanimously.
 - e. Proposal: stay in incipient.
- b. Hope (SCDNR) discusses the proposed date for the next meeting, she would like to have the meeting before the Drought Tabletop Exercise in March, given that there is not a quorum in half of the drought management areas today.
 - i. Dave discusses how there is a statewide exercise in March, so the March date would conflict with those meetings.
 - 1. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 26th, 2025.
 - ii. Hope (SCDNR) shows the Drought Tabletop Exercise at SCEMD on March 5th, 2025. This has been in the works for quite some time, and she would like 100% participation. We can comfortably fit about 100 people in the space at SCEMD. There will be representatives present from each river basin, as well as ESFs participating.
 - iii. Elliot Wickham (NOAA), formerly of the SC SCO, will also be in attendance. There will be an hour lunch, and the exercise should not go past 4:00pm.
 - iv. Ken Rentiers (SCDNR) calls for a motion to close the meeting.
 - 1. Karolan Ohanesian, 1st
 - 2. Athena Strickland, 2nd
 - v. Motion approved unanimously; the meeting is adjourned.

Committee Members	Group	Attendance 1/31/2025
West DMA		
Reg Williams	Agriculture	
Cheryl Daniels	Commission of Public Works	
Mark Warner	Counties	X
Eric Carrier	Domestic User	
David Evans	Industry	X
Lynn McEwen	Municipalities	X
Preston Pierce	Power Generation Facilities	X
J. Scott Willett	Private Water Supplier	X
Chris Rasco	Public Service District	X
Rick Green	Regional Council of Gov.	X
Yvonne Kling	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	X

Brian Chemsak	Special Purpose District	
Central DMA		
John Irwin	Agriculture	
Ken Tuck	Commission of Public Works	
Peggy Swearingen	Counties	
Christy Jones	Domestic User	X
Ed Holder	Industry	X
James G. Bagley	Municipalities	X
Alan Stuart	Power Generation Facilities	X
Brad C. Powers	Private Water Supplier	X
	Public Service District	VACANT
Gregory Sprouse	Regional Council of Gov.	
John T. Rivers	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	
Fred Castles	Special Purpose District	
Northeast DMA		
Caleb Miller	Agriculture	
	Commission of Public Works	VACANT
Karolan Ohanesian	Domestic User	X
Athena Strickland	Industry	X
Clint Elliott	Municipality	
	Power Generation Facilities	VACANT
	Private Water Supplier	VACANT
Alan Watkins	Counties	X
Elbert Warren	Public Service District	X

Lindsay Privette	Regional Council of Gov.	X
Joe Ghent	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	X
Nathan Ward	Special Purpose District	X
Southern DMA		
Landrum Weathers	Agriculture	
Jason Thompson	Commission of Public Works	X
	Counties	
Chris Wallace	Domestic User	
	Industry	
Eric Odom	Municipalities	
Matt McCants	Power Generation Facilities	X
	Private Water Supplier	VACANT
Russell Cornette	Public Service District	X
Ronald E. Mitchum	Regional Council of Gov.	
Marion L. Rizer	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	
	Special Purpose District	VACANT
State Agency Members		
Ken Rentiers	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Dave Thachik	SC Emergency Management Divis.	X
Joe Koon	SC Dept. of Environ. Services	X
Darryl Jones	SC Forestry Commission	X
Katherine Helms for Sam Quinney	SC Department of Agriculture	X
Hope Mizzell	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Melissa Griffin	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Alyssa Paguaga	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Kayla Stroman	FSA	X

Frank Alsheimer	NWS	X
Blair Holloway	NWS	X
Elliot Wickham	NOAA	X
Glenn Thomas	FSA	X
Alexis Modzelesky	SCDES	X
Scott Harder	SCDES	X
Marina Pariente		X
Stephen Fastenau	SCDNR	X